ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED001869	N.A.	Nos. 2-3

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S): Silver, Rawley, and Simon Carol T.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Art as a Means of Communication with Deaf and Aphasic Children

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: Pathways in Child Guidance

7. EDITOR(S): N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN: ORG. Board of Education of the City of; ST. New York; CITY, STATE; TELE. EXT.; INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE: Bureau of Child Guidance

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
VII	6-7	March 1965	2

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE: YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED: YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED: YES ☒ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT: PROPOSAL ☐ IN-PROGRESS ☐ FINAL ☒ FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: Report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

thought	relationships	talent	deaf children	
painting	personal growth	techniques	aphasic children	
creativity	expression	teacher	physically handicapped	
	memory	art	communication	

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Using art as a means of communication and expression, the deaf or aphasic child can remember, imagine, associate, generalize, and evaluate without language. Painting can enable him to discover and test his powers, and thus meet his emotional needs as well as provide an opportunity for his aesthetic growth. The child may show unexpected talent and creativity in this atmosphere free from anxiety or interference.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OR PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

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ED021869

Art As a Means of Communication with Deaf and Aphasic Children

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Creative imagination has been defined by Normal Meier, as a mental process which recognizes the analogies between experience and suitable expression which is intelligible to others. The form becomes art or attains an aesthetic character when the parts are organized in accordance with universal principles which exist in all good art. In drawing or painting, a work of art would then be one which attains a masterful functioning of balance, rhythm, line, and color to which people with "aesthetic judgment" can respond. The history of art and art forms, however, which has gone through the stages of representation, abstraction, and individual expressionism to the present combination of expression as social comment seems to belie any attempt to classify art in terms of its aesthetic components. Despite controversies as to the nature of art, and whether there is such a thing as pure aesthetic value without the addition of the viewer, most people would agree that art is a form of communication. The difficulty lies in what it is supposed to communicate.

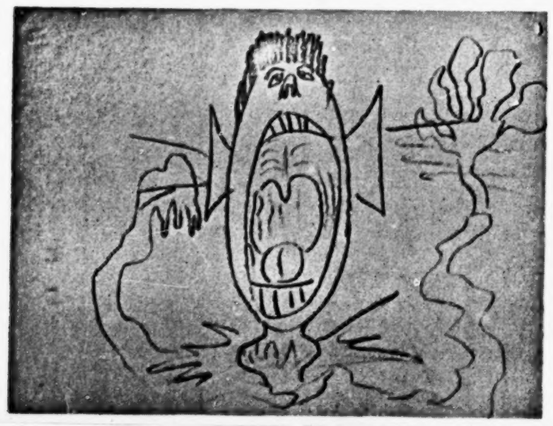
If art is considered art only if it has a masterful organization of aesthetic components, then only those with the particular craftsmanship and creative imagination can hope to use the form as a means of expression. Yet, we do not apply such restrictive codes to the field of letters. Everyone writes, whether to produce great works of literature, annual reports, or letters, since words are a universal method of communication. Educators train children in the skill of verbal communication regardless of whether they are to become Shakespeares or Dantes, write annual reports or only letters, yet many art educators feel that training in art should be confined to those who have "talent" and neglect the communication and expressive aspects of the field.

While verbal symbols must remain our primary means of communication, in this age of alienation and isolation of the individual, when even verbal symbols are not absolutes and do not convey exact concepts, other forms of communication, such as art and music, warrant examination.

While some educators argue that the only proper objective of art education is to transmit art techniques, art history, and art appreciation, others feel that art knowledge is the means rather than the end, and that the really important objective is to make students sensitive to aesthetic values and articulate in art *expression* by means of art knowledge. This is particularly true in the case of deaf and aphasic children, where verbal concepts and verbal communication are severely restricted. If deaf and aphasic children can be given an additional channel of communication, they can be encouraged to think abstractly, to understand verbal concepts, and to associate ideas which they are slow to learn without the full use of their verbal capacities. At the same time, they can fulfill their needs for emotional expression, and as they become more sensitive to art forms and skillful in art techniques, their creative imagination can be stimulated.

For the deaf or aphasic child, inadequate communication is a basic, persistent problem. While the hearing child learns language unconsciously, the deaf or aphasic child must exert all his power to learn his language word by word. While teachers concentrate on bringing him language as the essential means of communication, opportunities for communication through the visual arts have been neglected Throughout history, all over the world, the visual arts have been used for communication because art symbols are universally understood. Children all over the world use the same art symbols in their drawings. They represent people, objects or events, not in order to imitate reality but in order to record what they find significant. Children distort the appearance of their subjects according to what they know and how they feel about them. They make the more important person bigger, regardless of actual size. Their pictures, like the artist's, are usually "aimed at an audience." While the young hearing child often accompanies his scribbles with explanatory talk, naming his scribbles or telling stories about them, the deaf or aphasic child cannot talk about imaginary experiences, but he *can* draw and paint them. His paintings need not be works of art, but like works of art they can interpret and express and communicate, and thereby give his teachers an alternative means of finding out what he thinks or needs. If he is severely retarded in language, his pictures may be the only way he can convey abstract ideas without being hampered by his disability. But if his teacher is concerned only with technical skill, with the way the picture is drawn rather than with what it means, then the child is not likely to express the thoughts and feelings which he cannot verbalize, and an opportunity to learn about his attitudes, interests, knowledge, and needs has been lost.

It is often assumed that language is the only access to intellect, and that without language it is impossible to think, yet rationality goes beyond language and exists wherever a symbol is understood. If we accept Hilgard's definition of thinking as "behavior that uses ideas or symbolic representations of things or events," then art forms, like language, involve thinking through symbols. Making a picture requires more than perception and imagery. We not only see, we infer from what we see; we associate and generalize; we may refer to absent or imagined objects or experiences, involving memory or imagination; we condense, revise, clarify, arrange, and rearrange using evaluation. Painting a picture involves thought, and if we examine an aphasic child's painting beyond the mere formal aspect, we can understand his conceptualizations, even though it appears that he has not grasped the concept through his verbalizations. Since a deaf or aphasic child must remember be-



nless he clarifies his impressions, the more ecognizable his representation, the more ure we are of his concept, regardless of is actual artistic ability. When he puts his oncept into concrete form, his passive nowledge becomes active, and the same an be said for his ignorance, since he may orrect his mistakes when he sees them on aper.

Besides memory, another kind of inking which is involved in painting s association — putting things into re-tionships. The painter relates the parts f his picture to one another, to the viewer, nd to himself. Examining the organiza-on of the paintings of deaf and aphasic hildren tells us how the child associates, eneralizes, and categorizes, while the sub-ect matter tells us something of his ima-ination. Young hearing children relate to he world through fantasy, imagining they re lions, cowboys, airplanes; they ani-nate objects and invent situations. Deaf r aphasic children cannot verbalize their ntasies, but they can draw or paint them.

The teaching of art to deaf and aphasic tudents, not only offers a second channel f communication between student and eacher, but also permits students a mode f self-expression which can meet some of eir emotional needs. The deep satisfac-on which professionals gain from their rt, while related to their ability to give e utmost in power and skill, can also be xperience by the "Sunday painter" whose kills are not as highly trained. The shy, articulate student, with unmet emotional eeds, urgently needs to express and to cceed, and art may offer him a sat-fying mode of expression. According to llport, it is deep personal involvement hich "increases the breadth of learning, nd) of transfer affects." Children who ed a means of self-expression, may find e personal involvement which nurtures eir learning ability in art. The teacher no values imagination as highly as tech-cal skills and respects the subjective qual-es of a student's work is actually saying

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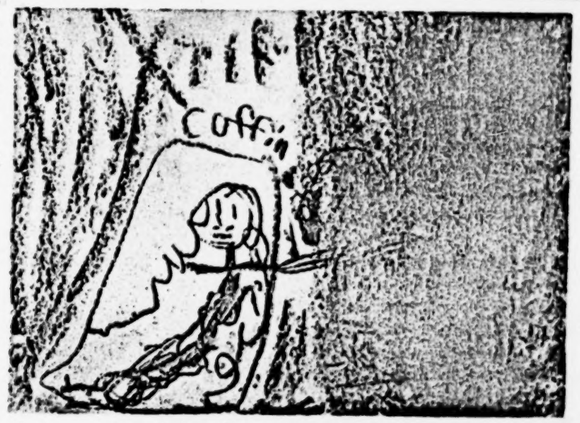

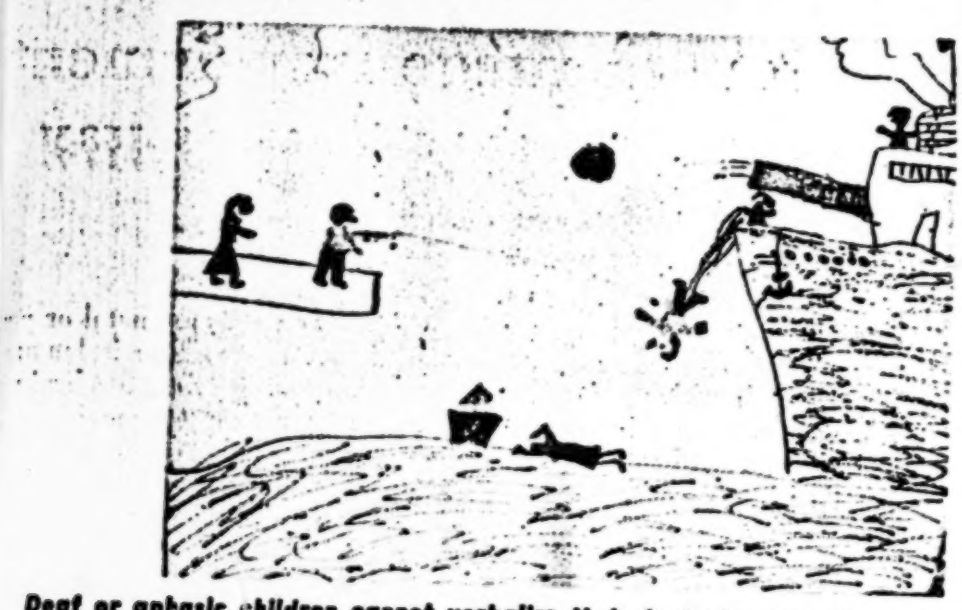

Deaf or aphasic children cannot verbalize their fantasies, but they can draw them.

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art

at he values and respects the student. The udent can take justified pride in the niqueness of his picture and it remains a ngible reminder of his success. Only af- r he feels it is safe to be himself can e project his feelings and imagination in- other work and become deeply involved it.

Needless to say, originality and self-ex- ression are not the whole of art, but they re prerequisites to art. As Martin Buber rote, freedom is the "first half of educa- on. It is the run before the jump, the tun- g of the violin." But freedom is not the me as growth, it is only the opportunity r growth. Freedom is not merely licen- ousness, but is consistent with responsi- ility, discipline, and hard work. In advo- ting art as a means of self expression for e deaf and aphasic child, one need not ean vague, undisciplined painting ses- ions without guidance or influence. While ethods of art training, which require the tudent to accept his teacher's own art alues—whether they are academic or ab- tract expressionist—inhibit freedom of ought and feeling, yet the opposite, com- lete freedom of self expression without iscipline and responsibility, cannot pro- ide the student with the structure he needs r growth. The art class can be struc- ured without being dominated.

Since the deaf and aphasic child is andicapped in communication, often either his intellectual or creative abilities an be properly evaluated. Creativity is ften concealed, even in normal children, s Torrance demonstrated in his studies of reative children. While various studies ave shown that originality is a necessary actor in creativity, it does not follow that he originality is overt. Students identified y Getzels and Jackson in *Creativity and ntelligence* shared a kindly environment, with families who permitted more diver- gencies and who were more accepting of risks than families of less creative students. Their consequent self-confidence may well children who suffer injury, pressure, or rejection, and who often have a desperate need for approval, might be equally creative if all areas of self-expression could be fully tapped. Deafness may well intensify the needs for encouragement, achievement, and independence. The deaf child often cannot understand what is expected of him and often cannot make himself understood. He must depend heavily on the promptings of others in order to know what is going on and may come to doubt his own perceptions and accede to everyone else's wishes, thus stifling his creativity. Through art, he can find out that he has competencies as well as disabilities, control over his world as well as dependence upon it. He can discover that his perceptions are valid and that he is worthy. Bypassing language, he can express his feeling in depictions, or without symbols, in tender or violent colors. Deafness will not necessarily interfere with aptitude for art. In fact, deafness might even prove an asset, since the deaf child is an observer by necessity. With his perception already concentrated on the visual, without the distractions of the hearing world, it would be as natural for him to find creative expression in art as it is for many blind students to find theirs in the field of music.

Jerome Bruner noted that "there is no reason to believe that any subject cannot be taught to any child at virtually any age in some form." The principles of learning are the same with all students, although they are often applied differently. In art, the principle of leaving students free in their pictorial efforts remains the same with children or adults, deaf or hearing. What is required is not a difference in subject matter but a difference in technique. In teaching the deaf, the art teacher need not *explain* techniques, he can demonstrate them. He can convey abstract ideas by acting out alternatives and find substitutes for language in art reproductions or on a drawing pad or blackboard.

In summary, limiting art education to

purposes without neglecting its own goals. The teaching of art to deaf and aphasic children can help them express and reveal what they cannot verbalize, and thus can serve as an additional channel of communication. The child's paintings can enable him to remember, imagine, associate, generalize, and evaluate without language, and thus can serve as an additional vehicle for thought. His paintings can also enable him to discover and test out his powers, and thus can serve to meet his emotional needs, as well as provide an opportunity for his aesthetic growth. In addition, given an opportunity to develop ability in an art class which is free from anxiety or interference, deaf and aphasic children might show unexpected talent and creativity.